



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
FIRE DEPARTMENT

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Jesuita Fire—May 2009

Wildland Fire Suppression Benefit Assessment District

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

2010

Message from the Fire Chief



Santa Barbara is one of the most beautiful places on earth. The majestic Santa Ynez Mountain range, facing southward to the sweeping beaches of the coastal plain create a panorama that is enjoyable year round, and a wonderful place to live and work. Yet, for the fourth year in a row, wildfire has deeply impacted our homes and lives. The Jesusita fire, which started on May 5, 2009 was yet another stark reminder to all of us, that our community is extremely vulnerable, and historically subject to wildfire. I would like to say that, after the past years, and the burning of over 260, 000 acres of vegetation and hundreds of our homes, that we have a margin of safety that we can rely on, however I can not. It is not a matter of *if*, but *when* there will be another wildfire in our local front country hillsides.

Santa Barbara City Fire Department is committed to help you as a homeowner living in the high fire hazard area prepare, mitigate and recover from the affects of fire. Money raised from the Benefit Assessment District goes directly toward furthering these efforts. Much progress has been made towards making our foothill neighborhoods more disaster resilient, even in the short time that the Benefit Assessment District has been in place. I know, as do firefighters that fought the blaze, that without this program and your cooperation to create defensible space around your homes, the effects of the Jesusita Fire would have been much more severe. Vegetation Management, Defensible Space, Vegetation Road Clearance, and pre-planning for evacuation and response are paying off!

My biggest concern as a Fire Chief is for life safety. The large scale evacuations that occurred during the Jesusita fire meant that if you weren't evacuated, you were sheltering an evacuee. I am proud of our community's successful response in the face of danger, and I want to introduce a program that reinforces what many of us have learned, and provides a framework for all of us to prepare for the future. Recognizing that our precious firefighting and public safety resources are stretched thin during major fires and particularly during initial attack, the **READY! SET! GO!** wildfire action plan provides for three steps that can help you to help yourself in the event of a wildfire:

READY! – Prepare yourself, your family and your property, create defensible space and fire “harden” your home and property.

SET! – Monitor fire weather, local conditions. Have an emergency plan in place and activate it, so you are ready to evacuate if conditions worsen.

GO! – Leave early when directed to by public officials, bring your emergency kit and provide for your pets and animals.

Firefighters know that advanced planning saves lives and property. Now you can too. For complete information on the **READY! SET! GO!** program please visit our Fire Department web site at www.SantaBarbaraca.gov or call our business office at (805)965-5254.

Andrew J. DiMizio

Fire Chief
Andrew J. DiMizio

YOUR ASSESSMENT DOLLARS PROVIDE FOR:

Vegetation Management Projects • Defensible Space Inspections • Chipping/Brush Removal •
Public Education & Outreach • Vegetation Road Clearance •
Customer Service & Compliance Support • Hotline 805-564-5737

2010 Defensible Space Chipping

*****Note:** Chip areas have been updated and changes may have been made to your previous chip area.

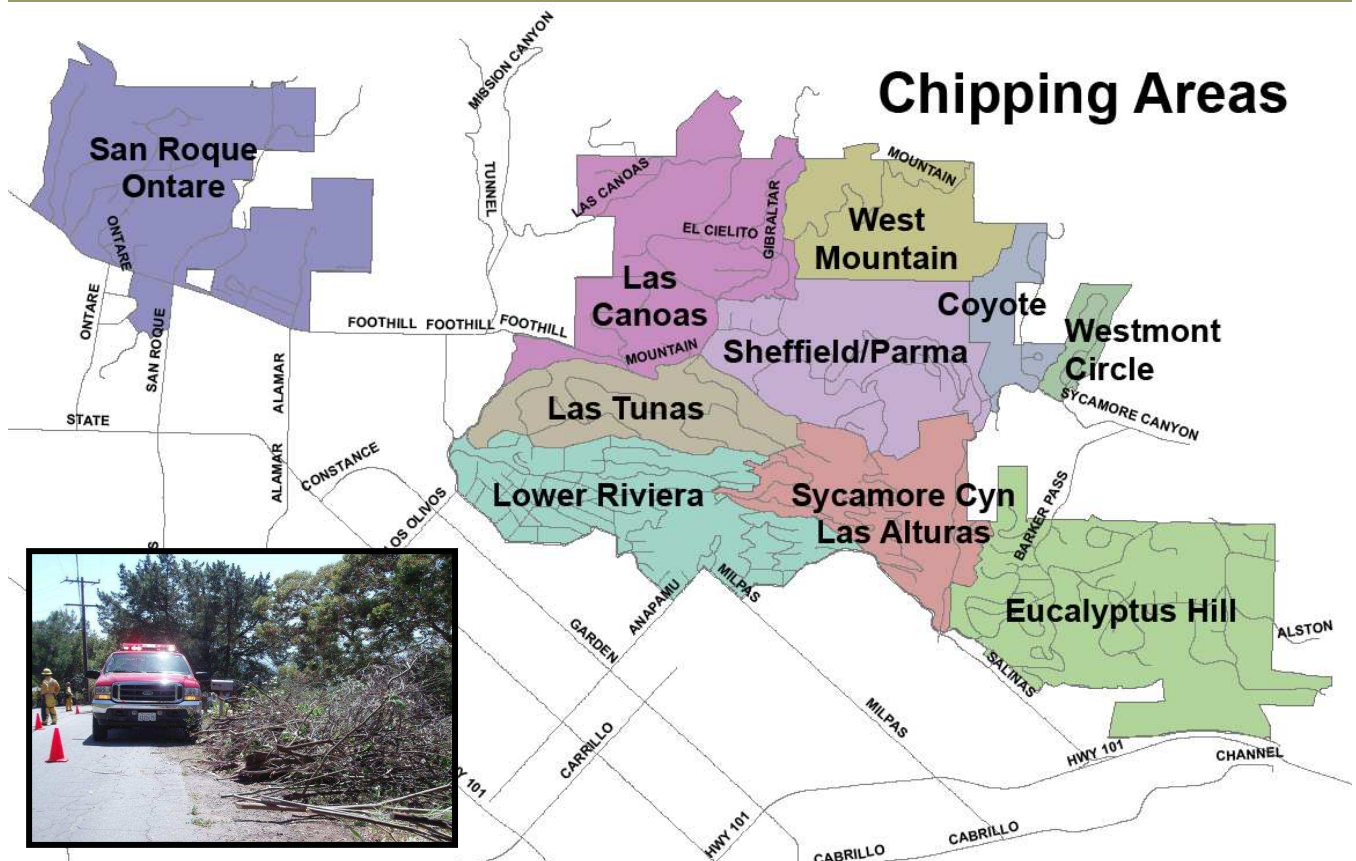
Please refer to the map of chip areas below. For further detail visit our website or call us at 564-5700

*Put your vegetation out on roadways **no sooner than two weeks** and **no later than the day of** your scheduled chip week (second passes will not be made).*



Vegetation properly stacked along roadway

Lower Riviera	March 1
Sycamore Canyon/Las Alturas	March 8
Eucalyptus Hill	March 15
Las Tunas	March 29
San Roque/Ontare	April 12
Las Canoas	April 19
Sheffield/Parma	May 3
Westmont/Circle	May 17
Coyote Road	May 31
West Mountain	June 14



We're On The Web....

Our website is a great place to find links to fire safe landscaping, exotic pest plants, defensible space requirements, and current events. Check the web for upcoming community projects and updates on what is happening in the WFSBAD.

<http://www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Government/Departments/Fire/>

Chipping Instructions

- Cut vegetation should be laid out in a pile along the street area and outside of the drivable roadway.
- The cut end of all vegetation must face the street so contractors can easily handle material.
- Brush should be left in long lengths (4-7 feet). It is much easier to chip.
- Branches should be no greater than 10 inches in diameter.
- Long piles OK as long as they are not over 4 feet in height.
- Old dead vegetation that has been lying around for years cannot be chipped (this type of vegetation damages chipper blades).
- Pine needles or other leaf litter cannot be chipped.
- Twine or string must not be used to tie vegetation.
- Rocks or other debris will not be chipped.
- Piles pushed or moved by mechanical means, i.e. tractor, cannot be chipped.
- Material in plastic bags will not be picked up.
- Grasses, palm fronds, succulents or agaves will not be chipped.



Chipping services are provided to encourage property owners to create defensible space and provide a cost effective way to dispose of cut material.

The City wants to make this project environmentally friendly, and needs the homeowners help in doing so. Our goal is to re-use 98% of all chipped material. To achieve this goal we need your help. If you can use chips on your property please contact Amber Anderson, Fire Services Specialist, at (805)965-5254.

There are very specific requirements of what can be chipped. The following chipping instructions outline the specific requirements. Vegetation that does not meet these requirements will not be chipped and will be left on site. The property owner will be responsible for the legal disposal of any material that cannot be chipped.

Exotic pest plants that will **NOT** be chipped include:

- Arundo
- All species of ivy
- Castor bean
- Fennel
- French/Soft/Scotch/Spanish broom
- Ice plant
- Tobacco weed
- Pampas grass
- Fountain grass
- Mediterranean grass
- Tamarisk
- Any kind of Bamboo

For a complete list see our website.

Road Clearance Update

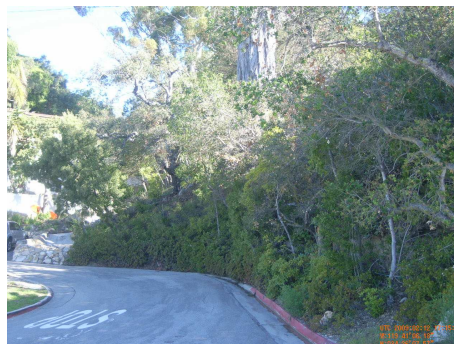
- Reduces the amount of vegetation along roadways
- Enhances evacuation during a wildland fire
- Allows greater access for fire engines and equipment to respond during a wildfire.



It is very important to maintain and keep up the work that has been completed. Maintaining roadways is not only important for your safety but the safety of the community.

Santa Barbara City Municipal Code requires homeowners to make sure that vegetation on their property does not encroach onto adjacent roadways. This effort includes keeping evacuation routes clear of flammable vegetation and thinning vegetation along the roadways.

13 miles of vegetation road clearance was completed this year!!



BEFORE



AFTER

Vegetation Management



View of St. Mary's Seminary during Jesusita Fire

The program is aimed at creating a Community Fuels Treatment Network along the most Northern boundary of the City, as well as working with private land owners to reduce fire risk throughout the district.

For information on how you can become involved in our Vegetation Management Program or for information on our multiple projects please call Fire Services Specialist, Amber Anderson at 965-5254



The project properties are identified in the City of Santa Barbara, Wildland Fire Plan as part of the Community Fuels Treatment Network or designated Vegetation Management Unit.



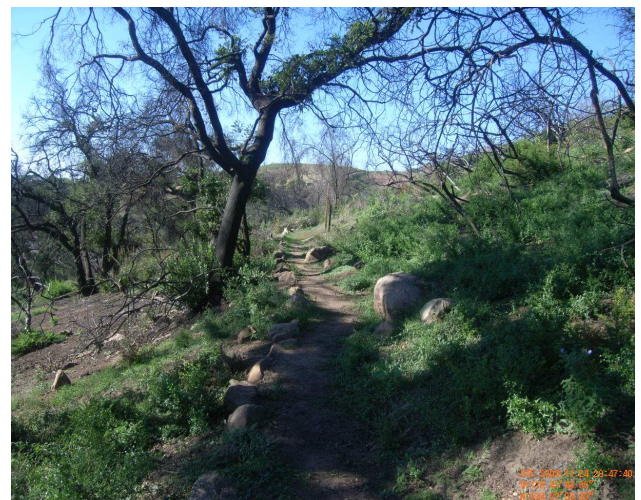
The **Community Fuels Treatment Network** will provide a break between the continuous decadent stands of chaparral fuel outside the City boundary and the City area. This will provide a strategic last line of defense for fire protection resources to suppress a wildland fire before it enters more highly populated areas of the City.

The **Vegetation Management Units** identified have unique fire hazards and risks. They contain high values that would be threatened by wildfire and have the potential for increased fire behavior. They pose a challenge for fire protection because of heavy, flammable vegetation, lack of access due to topography and roads and the increased risk to firefighters.

This year's project involves reducing the amount of flammable vegetation on over 30 acres in the Extreme Foothill and Foothill Zones by approximately 1/3 to 2/3. Vegetation management will be targeted on the removal of flammable vegetation (brush and under story) by preferentially removing exotic plants, thinning, pruning and limbing of vegetation to remove fire ladders, limbing up of oak over story, pruning out dead material, and thinning out continuous areas of brush using a mosaic pattern.

Upcoming Projects

- Completion of Community Fuels Treatment Network (28 Acres - Jesusita Lane/Ontare Rd/Northridge Area)
- Complete 1 Vegetation Management Unit (18 Acres - Las Canoas Road)



St. Mary's Seminary Project Area 1 year After 2008 Tea Fire

Wildland Fire Standards and Compliance Requirements

Beginning June 15, 2010 the Fire Department will be inspecting properties to determine compliance with the City's "Defensible Space Clearance Requirements."

- The requirements mandate the clearance of flammable vegetation from any structure and public or private street that is on or borders your property.
- The requirements for defensible space vary based on your wildland fire hazard zone.
- There are two high fire hazard zones within the WFSBAD;
 - *Extreme Foothill Zone* - 150 feet of defensible space is required.
 - *Foothill Zone* - 100 feet of defensible space is required.

See our website for defined zones.

Your property must be in compliance with these requirements by June 15 of this year, and is required by law to stay in compliance year-round.

If your property is not in compliance with the City of Santa Barbara Municipal Code, Chapter 8.04 at the time of inspection, you will be issued a warning and your property will be re-inspected.

Effective fire prevention measures can keep fires from starting and reduce hazards that threaten you and your neighbors' property.

The intent of defensible space clearance is not to promote the indiscriminate clearing of land. It is possible to create defensible space and retain the visual beauty, privacy and environmental health of your property. The Fire Department urges you to learn more about wildfire and what you can do to prepare for it.

If you have questions regarding these requirements and would like more information on wildfire preparedness, evacuation and community involvement please contact the Fire Department, Fire Prevention Division or check out our website.



FIRE LOVES FUEL...

**It does not care if it is natural vegetation or part of a home.
It does not care if it is yours, ours, theirs, public or private.**

- Homeowners • Families • Neighborhoods • Businesses •
- Parks • Schools • City of Santa Barbara •

Working Together for Fire Safety, Prevention, and Preparedness



Voluntary Defensible Space Inspections

*We Are Here
To Help!*

The City of Santa Barbara Fire Department offers voluntary inspections of your property to ensure that your home is protected. During a major wildland fire the majority of homes lost are not engulfed by the fire front. They are lost when fire embers find a weakness in your home and start a small fire that can lead to total loss.

Santa Barbara is known for its extreme fire weather and has a long history of extreme loss during the Sycamore, Paint and Tea and, most recently, the Jesusita fires. In a wind driven fire there is no guarantee that your home will survive, but we can strive to make each and every home as safe as possible.

This last year we performed over 100 Defensible Space Assistance Inspections with property owners throughout the WFSBAD. Each and every one of the homeowners that asked for an inspection walked away after the inspection with a safer home and more knowledge than before. We again are offering this valuable service to the community.

If you have any questions about how to make your home compliant with the City's defensible space requirements please contact us.



For voluntary inspections please call 965-5254

Meet your first weapon against wildfire...Defensible Space!



Jesusita Fire 2009

- ◆ Enhancing the beauty and value of any property can be established by creating a balance of colorful plants, trees, shrubs, rocks, mulch and other landscaping materials.
- ◆ Fire safe landscaping uses vegetation modification techniques, planting for fire safety and defensible space principles all while being integrated into a homeowner's aesthetic desires and functional needs of the property.
- ◆ Fire safe landscaping uses driveways, lawns, walkways, patios, water features such as pools or ponds, fences constructed of non-flammable materials such as rock or brick, and large boulders or rock groupings.



Before

The buffer zone you create by removing weeds, brush and other vegetation helps to keep the fire away from your home and reduces the risks from flying embers.

The key factor in determining whether or not your home will survive a wildfire is Defensible Space. That is why a large part of wildland safety in the WFSBAD lies in the hands of homeowners. It is imperative that your home is up to the City's defensible space requirements at all times.

Cost Effective Vegetation Management Tips

Reduce Fire Ladders: Separate and space your plants.

Reduce Ignition Sources: Embers may blow miles ahead of the fire. Frequently check and remove leaves and debris from roofs and gutters. Check under decks and porches, deck furniture, play/storage structures, door mats, and potted plants.

Trees: Remove branches from the ground a minimum of 6 feet or 1/3 the total height of the tree. Remove all dead branches.

Brush: Remove dead fuel and limb up 2 feet from the ground. Keep separation between shrubs, brush and trees.

Grass: Mow down to 2 inches from the ground.

Debris Piles: Do not pile wood chips or mulch on your property. Spread and maintain to a depth not exceeding 4-6 inches. Compost should be kept in an appropriate container.

Ornamental Plants: Must be irrigated, maintained and pruned year-round.



After

Desirable Qualities for Fire Resistant Landscape Plants

- Ability to store water in leaves or stems
- Produces limited dead and fine material
- Extensive root systems for controlling erosion
- Plant has high levels of salt or other non-resinous compounds within its tissues that can contribute to fire resistance
- Ability to withstand drought
- Plants that are low growing in form
- Ability to withstand severe pruning
- Low levels of volatile oils or resins
- Ability to re-sprout after a fire



Landscape vegetation can be as combustible as wildland vegetation.

Defensible Space Is.....

an area around your home or structure free of flammable plants and objects that creates a zone in which firefighters can operate safely in order to help protect a home during a wildfire.



Special attention should be given to the use and maintenance of ornamental plants known or thought to be high hazard plants when used in close proximity to structures. Examples include Acacia, Cedar, Cypress, Eucalyptus, Juniper, Pine, and Pampas Grass. These plantings should be properly maintained and not allowed to be in mass plantings that could transmit fire from the native growth to any structure.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Am I required to keep my property in compliance year-round?

Yes.

I don't use a fireplace. Do I still need a spark arrester?

Yes. It is required by law.

Should ivy climbing on my house and trees be removed?

Yes. Ivy and other vines act as a fuel ladder and make your home vulnerable to fire.

Can you recommend some fire-resistant plants?

Yes. Please visit our website at www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/fire and remember that all plants that are listed require maintenance. In addition, visit the Firescape Garden across from Fire Station #7

I am concerned about a neighboring property? What do I do?

Call the Fire Department at 965-5254 to address your concern.

Can new building codes protect my home from a fire?

Fire safe building practices can't make your home fire proof but they can improve the chances that it will be standing after the fire.

Additional Resources

Websites with information about native and fire-resistant plants and living in the Wildland Urban Interface

Firewise.....www.firewise.org
 Fire Safe Councilwww.firesafecouncil.org
 FEMA—Wildfirewww.fema.gov/hazard/wildfire/index.shtm
 CAL FIRE.....www.fire.ca.gov
 Be Water Wise.....www.bewaterwise.com/fire.html
 USDA Forest Service.....www.fs.fed.us
 S.A.F.E. Landscapes.....<http://groups.ucanr.org/SAFE>

The Santa Barbara Firescape Demonstration Garden, The garden is located at the intersection Mission Ridge Road and Stanwood Drive, across from the City of Santa Barbara Fire Station #7 at 2411 Stanwood Dr. The garden is open from 8A.M. to sunset daily and admission is free!



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
FIRE DEPARTMENT

Blog Us!
<http://wfsbad.blogspot.com/>

Santa Barbara
County Fire History

Year	Fire Name	Acres	Homes Lost
1955	Refugio	84,770	Several
1964	Coyote	67,000	100+
1971	Romero	14,538	4
1977	Sycamore	805	234
1977	Hondo	10,000	0
1979	Eagle	4,530	5
1990	Paint	4,900	524
1993	Marre	43,864	0
2002	Sudden	7,160	0
2004	Gaviota	7,440	1
2007	Zaca	240,207	0
2008	Gap	9,445	0
2008	Tea	1,940	238
2009	Jesusita	8733	80



W.F.S.B.A.D.

City of Santa Barbara Fire
Department
121 W Carrillo Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
Phone 805.564.5702

Living With Wildfire

Wildfire has always been a part of the Santa Barbara Community. The chaparral environment has adapted over millions of years with fire as a natural part of its ecosystem. Current and past fire exclusion and suppression policies have resulted in a large accumulation of vegetation throughout the foothill area. When wildfire burns in these areas, it burns with increased intensity and severity. As vegetative growth and development continues in our urban wildland interface areas, there is an increased potential for loss of life, structures and resources, both natural and economic. It is only a matter of time until the next wildfire occurs.

Preparation for the next wildfire requires you to take **personal responsibility** to protect yourself, your family, and your property. Many property owners feel that a fire truck will be there to protect their property. During a major wildfire there will not be enough firefighting resources available to defend every home. Consequently, the most critical person in preparing and protecting your life and property is not the firefighter, but **you**, the property owner.

Fire is part of our natural environment. Our brush covered hills, canyons and forests burned periodically long before homes were built here. People have moved into this environment, and many of us have built and landscaped with no thought of wildfire. Today's wildfires burn fast and seasonal hot dry winds drive fires even faster, making them impossible to control.

This newsletter should be used by homeowners, within the WFSBAD, as a tool to aid individual wildfire preparation efforts.

